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ACF Chefs and Culinary Professionals of Chicagoland, founded in 1925, is one of the fastest-growing chapters of the American Culinary Federation (ACF). Click [here](#) for more information.

Simple Things

After about five months of working and staying close to home (honestly, about a five-mile radius of adventure), I started to think about things I really miss. The one thing I miss is a pint. Every year, I make a couple of trips to England to visit my family and my mom. One of my "fixes" is the need to sit at a pub and drink a pint. If you follow my social media, I have a habit of showing a perfectly poured draft beer before I would show a picture of myself. It's kind of sad in some ways. The other part of that experience is sometimes a great meal.

The English pub has evolved over many years, with the food being one area of improvement that has driven a revolution. We would not have our gastro pubs and tavern fare in the US without it. When pubs put the chef up front, bought local and got rid of the frozen foods, things changed. The "anything fried in a basket with a packet of sauce" was replaced by fresh caught fish, local vegetables and even gourmet burgers, and the joy of that pint was doubled.

Eating in the pub is not a fast-casual experience, nor is there complicated service. The food is honest, hot and simple. England is not the only place in the world I have had great pub food. I have enjoyed it in Switzerland, Poland, Japan and Chile. But there is one ingredient that you always see on the menu in some form: the potato. Yes, what we call French fries is as universal as anything else.

I think we take the potato for granted as something that you just have to have-and sometimes in too big a quantity on the plate. It can be a great profit vehicle for a restaurant. Nothing beats those first hot fries straight from the oil, perfectly salted (and of course with either white, brown or red sauce for dipping, albeit homemade this time). But stop and think about that; that is fine eating out. Can you honestly say French fries delivered in styrofoam or a paper box wrapped in a bag are good?

I started to think about some of the best potatoes I have eaten and the thousands of pounds I have cut, diced, turned, manipulated, mashed or served. The stereotypical image of the apprentices, army cooks and families sitting around a bucket peeling spuds is somewhat truthful. Traditional culinary training does focus on the skills to create and the knowledge of specific knife cuts. The vast majority of the classical named cuts are more associated with potatoes than they are with other vegetables.

As I get a little grayer haired in my beard and feel the belt tighten, I have really curtailed my eating of potatoes and



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The hunt for unique craft beers is just as fun as the tasting. Here is [The List](#) of beers that we have tasted at our weekly craft beer tap room meeting.



CHEESE

starches. However, there are a few potato dishes that if made right, I make the exception and savor them with a good pint. So, what are my favorites?

- Homemade chips with malt vinegar
- Crispy, well-cooked shredded hashbrowns or Swiss rösti
- Potato puree, not mashed, with lots of cream and butter
- Gratin Dauphinoise. Look up Escoffier Recipe # 4200. Even though I don't make it that way
- Really good potato salad, but not made with red skins. Does anyone really like the taste of the skin on the red ones?

There are a lot of choices when it comes to potatoes, from Idaho to fingerling to purple and red. Each has its challenges, from size and starch content to texture, but the one thing common about cooking with potatoes is to keep it simple. In this month's video, I am going to show you how to make three of my favorites that remind me of eating at a pub and enjoying a pint. I know that soon enough, we will be at the bar sharing a meal and raising a glass. So, until then, thank your neighbors and friends for being respectful to each other so we can once again share a basket of chips!

- Chef John Reed, CEC, CCA

THE VIRTUAL RUBBER BAND DOORKNOB

Episode 5: All About Potatoes





Not to be shy about it, but I have been able to work with some of the best Italian cheeses you can get, and they do make awesome pizza. If you haven't tried them, definitely look for [Galbani](#) next time.

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